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Representative Patricia Lantz
2008 Session Report



26th Legislative District

SPRING 2008

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Happy Spring!

The 2008 legislative session concluded before the cherry blossoms even had a chance to bloom on the state capitol campus. Although it was a short (60-day) session this year, we passed some important legislation, particularly in the areas of consumer protection and public safety. I provide more details of the session within this newsletter.

I would like to thank those who turned out on February 23 for my Town Hall Meeting in Port Orchard. We had a good discussion on a wide range of issues, and it helped me to better understand the concerns you have about our district and state government in general.

Part of this year's session included the passage of a supplemental state budget. I am pleased to say that the updated operating budget continues to fund important programs and services for Washingtonians, while maintaining with \$850 million in reserves – without any new taxes. This is the second-highest reserve in legislative history, and will provide good protection from any economic downturn we may yet face. So far, our state has been fortunate to enjoy a healthy economy, with historically low unemployment. But nationally we may be unable to avoid recession, and gas prices continue to be at record highs. For these reasons, it's good to have healthy reserves.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to serve as your state representative for the past 12 years. As you probably have heard, I am retiring when my term expires in January 2009. Until then, I look forward to continuing to address your questions and concerns. Please don't hesitate to contact my office.

It is a great honor and privilege to represent the 26th district, one of the most beautiful areas of the state!

Sincerely,

Patricia Lantz

Committees: Judiciary (Chair)
Agriculture & Natural Resources
Appropriations Subcommittee on
General Government & Audit Review

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CRACKING DOWN ON SCAM ARTISTS & UNSCRUPULOUS LENDERS



For many of us, the family home is both our biggest investment and our greatest asset. It's the place we raise our children, where we throw backyard barbeques in the summer or gather for the winter holidays.

Homeownership rates have reached unprecedented levels. Unfortunately, unscrupulous lenders have saddled many homeowners with mortgages they can't afford. These families now face the loss of their homes to foreclosure. Worse, scam artists are taking advantage of people's desperation, offering the opportunity to be "rescued" from foreclosure. But instead of being rescued, homeowners are being scammed out of their homes and equity.

I sponsored House Bill 2771 that will protect legitimate organizations while driving the scam artists out of business. Homeowners will now have safeguards, such as the requirement that all contracts be in writing, a five-day right of cancellation that can't be waived, and the right to sue for triple damages.

I also co-sponsored House Bill 2770, which protects borrowers by setting up limits on prepayment penalties and forbids mortgage brokers from steering borrowers toward a subprime loan when they know the borrower qualifies for a lower interest one.

HELPING STUDENTS SUCCEED



From kindergarten through college, we further improved our state's education system this session by:

- Funding the second phase of all-day kindergarten, so that our children have the foundation they need to succeed in first grade and beyond.
- Investing in both new and existing opportunities to help struggling high school students, specifically targeting 11th and 12th graders who are not on track to graduate, and 8th graders who did not pass the WASL.
- Providing funding for a program to expand higher education opportunities on the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas. From the Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, to the many local small business employers, we have heard a consistent message that we are not meeting the workforce needs of our region. The 2008 state operating budget includes over \$200,000 for an advisory committee made up of local business, community and education leaders to work with the Higher Education Coordinating Board on recommendations for how to meet this clear education need.



Rep. Lantz with National MADD President Glynn Birth and CEO Chuck Hurley, and Washington State Patrol Chief John Batiste.

SAFER ROADS & HIGHWAYS

As chair of the House Judiciary Committee, I sat through heart-wrenching testimony this session from people who have lost loved ones to drunk drivers.

It's not enough to simply get tough about drunk driving. We also have to get smart. I sponsored a measure that creates an ignition interlock requirement when a person's license is suspended for DUI. If the person chooses to drive anyway, despite having a suspended license, he or she won't put the rest of us in danger. The ignition interlock device prevents a vehicle from being driven if the driver has consumed alcohol.

This new law will save lives - experts estimate as many as 100 a year.

RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

People choose to live on the Peninsula because of the quality of life here. From Kopachuck State Park to Port Orchard Bay, we have some of the most beautiful scenery and outdoor areas in the state.



Our district has seen a lot of growth and change. While growth is certainly important for the economy, none of us want to see our quality of life diminished in the process. Finding the right balance is the key.

We passed a terrific bill this session, House Bill 2844, that will help promote tree conservation and retention in our urban communities. Named the "Evergreen Communities Bill," it will help local governments adopt management plans and ordinances regarding urban forests. These forests are very important because they improve our property values, enhance the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink, and protect Puget Sound by reducing storm water runoff.

Finally, you may remember that last session I sponsored a bill which, among other provisions, funded research by the UW Sea Grant Program into the effects of geoduck aquaculture on the environment. This is an important issue in our district, where we are striving to balance property rights and economic development with environmental protections. We need good science upon which to make policy decisions. Research projects established by my bill are commencing, which will examine the environmental effects of structures and commercial harvesting. The program will also compile information about diseases and parasites in both wild and cultured geoducks.

WHAT I'M WORKING ON DURING THE INTERIM:

BIKE TRAIL

The new Narrows Bridge includes a bike path. I'd like to increase access to this path and take advantage of the spectacular view it offers by linking it to the Cushman Trail. The route follows Stone Drive under the bridge and traverses Narrowsgate Park, giving cyclists a safe and beautiful corridor all the way from Gig Harbor into Tacoma.

REDUCING LIGHT POLLUTION

The night sky is something we tend to take for granted. But what if our children and grandchildren were not able to see the stars anymore? It was this simple question that got me interested in the very real problem of light pollution facing many of our urban centers today. I laid the foundation with House Bill 2534 this session, and will work with the Audubon Society and other environmental groups on improving it. The House Ecology & Parks Committee is committed to taking up this issue during the 2009 session.

